

the FRIENDS of SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK

ALVARO JARAMILLO-BIRD BEHAVIOR

Hooray, he's back—our charismatic guide from Half Moon Bay, this time to enthrall us with a lecture on the behavior of some of our well-known avians— **Sat., July 11 at 8pm** in our Visitor Center.



While Jaramillo is an authority on the behavior of New World **Blackbirds**, having written a book on these **Icterids**, he has also written a guide, "Birds of Chile" & has published many articles on birds & their behavior in various journals

& magazines.

Alvaro has a masters degree from a Canadian University, where he did a detailed study of co-evolution in Argentinian **Cowbirds**. Since that time he joined "Field Guides" leading avian outdoor study trips to Chile, Uruguay & the Galapagos as well as across the coast, valley & mountains of Central California. (Blackbird sketch—Fla. Tech. Ed. Clearing-house)



RUN, STEELHEAD, RUN, with RALPH LARSEN

Join us on **Sat., August 22 at 8pm**, for a sought-after speaker on the steelhead of San Pedro Creek, Pacifica's own **Dr. Ralph Larsen**.



"I am an ichthyologist [fish scientist]...who, began to participate in the activities of the San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition several years ago,

and helped set up two surveys of **steelhead** and their habitats in the creek.

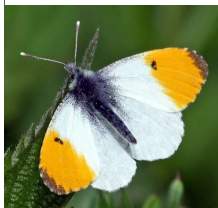
I was a science nerd in high school; liked biology, & thought I would become an MD. On my 16th birthday, my parents gave me a "birthday trip" to SF for the day, from LA. On the flight north, I spoke with a marine
(*Cont'd on p. 4*)

ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

On May 9, **Ranger Jonel Ishida** spotted an approximately 16" long **gopher snake** crossing the Weiler Ranch Road, going toward the field.



Laurie Nikitas was hiking along the old Montara Mt. Road in an area contiguous with the park when she sighted an insect never reported in this newsletter: a **Sara Orange Tip Butterfly**. (my.opera.com w.s.) (continued p 4)



RAY PESTRONG'S GEOLOGY of the "WEST"

Note: This is a Wednesday Program

On **Wednesday, July 22, at 8pm**, **Ray Pestrong**, professor of Geology at San Francisco State University, will speak to Coastsiders on the geology of Hawaii, Yellowstone, & our own San Andreas Fault (pictured below from commons.btic.ca w.s.) to show the weird & violent changes our crust undergoes. He likes to mix the Arts in with his geology—so enigmatically, the title of his talk is "Using Geology to Aid in Long Term, (VERY) Long Term Investments."

Dr. Pestrong has traveled throughout the Bay Area and the Sierras, giving the field trips he truly loves to his college students at SFSU, where he teaches classes in geomorphology and engineering geology, as well as a variety of courses in undergraduate geology. He has authored a number of geology texts, published many articles, as well as producing geologic videos.



Ray graduated from the City College of New York in Geology, achieved his M.S in Geology with a minor Civil Engineering from MIT, & received a PhD from Stanford University in Geology.

Please come if you like the idea of shows during the week &, of course, if this topic & speaker intrigue you as much as they do me!

TRIMMING THE WILD

Well, it was just **me** and **Ed Decker** at the May 9 Trail Day. As 8:30am rolled around and we figured it'd just be us, we decided to follow **Ranger Doug's** suggestion of taking a string trimmer and cleaning up the Plaskon Nature Trail. So we rounded up the gear -- me the trimmer and Ed a rake, pitchfork and lopers -- and headed out. We worked along the entire length of the trail, cutting back vegetation on both sides of the trail (as well some low-hanging overhead branches). All should be good for a while again on this nice little trail. (Text and photo by **Joseph Piro**)



SPRING SURGE REPORTS:

May 1—Dogwoods are going crazy in the Park—best spot is the observation deck behind the visitor center. The white flat blossoms have a musk-like odor, the veins of the leaves are prominent, like veins on an older person's hand. A **hummingbird** zooms by my ear—the cracks in the concrete are full of the “cotton” from the spent seed sails of the **wil-lows** and **alders**. (Oregon Country Wildflowers photo of our creek dogwood)



May 18—Jack Dodson—Went on a walk on Weiler Road and heard a loud confabulation of **ravens** irate over something. Wildlife tells you so much if you listen. We're surrounded by the languages and cues of other species. I knew from the ravens angry cries that something was disturbing them and it was unlikely a **cat*** as they (praise Allah!) rarely venture into the park. Sure enough, after several minutes of wait a magnificent **red-shouldered hawk** (copyrighted photo, courtesy of Cary Maures of Daly City) emerged from the high **Eucalyptus** trees at the beginning of the Valley View Trail with several ravens chasing it. I think one even nipped his tail feathers. I've observed several instances where young ravens are viciously attacked and wounded by local hawks. People should know this, too, when they judge the raven as a "nest robber", an avian terrorist.



May 19 & 20—Yea, new knees allowed me to tromp up the west Hazelnut with **Katie Antista**. A few **buttercups** and several **blue-eyed grass** lit up the trail, but higher above Kate's breath was taken away by a “rare” **yellow Franciscan paintbrush** (copyrighted photo use courtesy of **Margo Bors** of SF); there were elegant red ones as well, and the scarlet **Coastside paintbrush** with their layered, fuzzy asparagus-like tops. The various blue flowers of **Douglas Iris** were still freshly open in the shade, and Katie laughed at the display of one set of 3 unopened irises that she said looked like blue “candles” gracing one side of the trail.



We worked our way up past the old fallen **oak**, discussing the multitude of mini ecosystems this resting giant is supplying for wildlife—then past the old **madrone**, and on the left bank looked for and found the petit pink circle of petals, the yellow center of the **wild rose** (unclaimed web photo) and its almost lacey leaves. Though only three flowers advertised their “faces”, a multitude of others sequestered their pink blossoms behind the thick brush. White, plate-like **cow parsnip** blossoms had grown wildly over the first damp curve of the trail, but only broad leaves remained of the **hound's tongue**, and happily I thought about late February of next year, when I could once see the really early bloomers along this trail of flowers.



NEWS BRIEFS

The parking lot has gone wild, wild with natives that is, beautiful young plants, including **pink flowering currant**, **huckleberry**, **manzanita**, **coastal sage**, etc. A far cry from the monoculture we had before. Thanks goes to all the rangers: **Doug Heisinger**, **Jonel Ishida**, **David Vasquez**, and others for their plantings!

The Hazelnut trail was closed for a couple of weeks in June because of the terribly overgrown brush on its east end. A nat'l youth group came all the way from Oak-land to help complete the job. **Ranger Jonel** worked like the devil, taking on the worst challenge you could imagine—you can ask her about it! **Ranger Doug** and aide “**A.J.**” came out only a little worse for the wear. Info from area supervisor, **Scott Lombardi** and others.

FACTION

Dragonflies, those weirdly prehistoric insects that course the stream areas as adults, only flap their wings at about 30 beats per second (bps) compared to a **bee's** 300 bps., and the **gnat's** 1046 bps! But they are excellent and strong fliers, who while appearing unwieldy, in the manner of an old prop airplane, manage to loop-the-loop, hover, and fly backwards! Look for these large insects during the warmer days of “summer” in SPVP. (Green Darner dragonfly sketch by **Gina Mikel**)



JUNE TRAIL DAY & HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

June was a tough month for **Joseph Piro** and **Jim Pommier**, who were the only members of our 80+ strong organization to show up to work on trails!! We'll be calling you, hoping for a show of support on July 11. **Jim Mackey**, **Jim Pommier**, & **Istvan Pushki** executed a raid on **Pampas grass** & other invasives on the Brooks Falls trail, trimming the brush back as they progressed, during the June habitat restoration day (3rd Sat—month).

A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

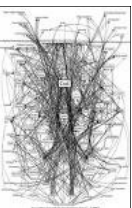
July – Aug. 2009

Distribution and abundance are features of animal and plant populations that intrigue and challenge ecologists. Why are there only several dozen shrubs of **leatherwood** (*Dirca occidentalis*) isolated in the Bay Area (including those along our Brooks Creek and Hazelnut Trails), while their nearest relatives are in Missouri? Why did we have swarms of **convergent ladybird beetles** (Jim Mackey photo) in the Trout Farm Picnic Area last Spring? In seeking answers to such questions, scientists consider a seemingly infinite number of environmental factors, included in categories such as topography,



soils& climate. And each factor might function in any of many ways to limit the distribution of an organism. So the absence of large **succulent plants** from the Great Basin Desert is not correlated with the average annual temperature but the below-freezing temperatures that occur in winter. Finally, an ecologist must consider historic factors, such as glaciation, fire, continental drift and land use. So some of the floristic differences between the grassland by the Valley View Trail and that in the meadows by the Weiler Ranch Road may be due to the former having been grazed, while the latter was once farmed for **artichokes** and is now mowed annually.

Global Warming. Dr. Peter Roopnarine, curator of geology and paleontology at the California Academy of Sciences, gave a stimulating lecture at our Visitor Center on May 30. He succeeded in connecting wide-ranging subjects, such as food webs, evolution, extinction, ecosystem services [such as cleansing of a stream by certain bacteria] to humans, and human population growth. Peter's examples ranged from ancient communities of **giant amphibians** [a labyrinthodont that developed after the great Permo-Triassic extinction is shown at right] in southern Africa to modern communities of **marine fishes** off of Alaska. He suggested that as soon as three years from now the summer Arctic ice may break up enough to allow **fishes** from the Pacific to migrate into the Atlantic Ocean. One of Peter's slides showed a diagrammatic illustration of a marine food web that had more strands than any **spider's web**; it was labeled: a "simplified" food web (diagram courtesy of P. Roopnarine). So, more basic life history information is needed for most species, and



ecosystems are complex, thus making it difficult to predict the outcome of changing distributions – including those brought on by global warming.



"Saving the Honeybee" is the title of a fascinating article in Scientific American, April, 2009. There may be many proximate causes of Colony Collapse Disorder (e.g. **mites**, **viruses**, insecticides), but an ultimate cause may be that the **bees** have a reduced resistance to such factors. The authors suggest that the bees' "general well-being" could be improved by breaking up large stretches of single crops or lawns with more **weedy** meadows and hedgerows. Plants flowering at different times of the year could then provide more variety in pollinators' diets. (honey bee photo from public blog)

"Habitat restoration" [Jane Turrel's suggestion] is a term that I prefer to "native plant day" for our Volunteers' work on the 3rd Saturday of the month. This is because it often seems that an alien plant may be a vital part of the habitat of some desirable animal. So, alien **thistles** and **wild radish** along the Weiler Road and Trout Farm Trail are important sources of nectar for **butterflies**, **bumble bees** (photo from extermination co.)& **honey bees**, especially in late summer. Why do we mow these strips and the main meadows? Has the mowing maintained the weeds and grasses by preventing them from being succeeded by shrubs? Are we mowing the weeds at the best time to allow their utilization by pollinators?



Poor Jim's Almanac. Watch for hatchling **fence lizards** in early August.

UNDER THE OLD OAK TREE

At the W. end of the Hazelnut, were four serious enemies of the dreaded South African **Cape ivy**: **Jim Mackey**, **Jim Pommier**, **Istvan Pushki**, and **Sara Shaw**, battling its twisting, tenacious hold on the surrounding plants and soil. This quartet of trouble for the alien plants then had a stand-off with the most determined roots in the Park, those of **vinca**, aka "**periwinkle**" (vinca photo by John Crellin). After they "knocked out" some **hemlock** at the beginning of the Plaskon, there was need for some respite from their tendon-wrenching jobs, and the only place to go was the Native Sun Garden. Though **Katie Antista** had put in 5 full hours of weeding for our beloved plants, many interlopers were still peeking out among the beauties, and, of course, they were dispatched by our team. (Thank you, **Jim Pommier**, for your information)





ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

Trail regular, **Barbara Kempster**, was watching a **female quail** take a dust bath in the South Walnut picnic area on May 29, at 5:30pm, when she found out she was not the only one watching this lovely grey bird “powder” herself. A **male quail** with a prominent crest and a puffed up chest made a beeline for her and

mounted her. More baby quails to come? By the way, quail are monogamous. (www.whakaangi.com photo of CA Quail)

“infants” emerge: A man from the water district saw a **ba-bby bobcat** at 1pm on the hill above the entry kiosk twice in mid-late June. **Ray Trabucco** saw “an almost new-born” **fawn** with hair sticking straight out just above the picnic tables on the Trout Farm Road, at 6:30pm on 6/23. “The baby had a “fox head” & was munching on grass with a possibly **still-pregnant Mom**. Various people have seen **baby quail** late in Je, one woman claiming to have seen 20!

CRAIG NIKITAS AND THE RENEGADE COYOTE

Who trusted God was love indeed

And love Creation's final law

Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw

With raving, shriek'd against his creed (Tennyson)

Just thought I'd share a raw experience of our urbanized natural environment: Driving to work in SF this morning, I was stopped at the intersection of Portola Dr & O'Shaughnessy Blvd. Just before the light turned green, a **coyote** dashed out of the plantings above McAteer School (SOTA) and trotted across eight traffic lanes. Dangling from its mouth was what I first thought was a **skunk**, but proved to be someone's black & white **kitty**. The coyote headed up the Woodside Av sidewalk. I'd love to know its destination.

Somewhere in Glen Park or Diamond Heights, a family will mourn the unexplained loss of a beloved pet. Somewhere on Twin Peaks or Forest Hill, **coyote pups** will have a meal to get through another day. It's amazing to me that this apparently successful canid commutes from its den to part of its hunting territory by crossing Portola Blvd. Perhaps, like some urban **crows** and **ravens**, it's learned to understand traffic lights, and when it's safe to enter a street.

(photo by T. Boswell, Dept. of Animal Regulation, City of Los Angeles)

Even more remarkable was the complete obliviousness of all the drivers surrounding me. Not one reacted or seemed to register that a coyote just crossed their paths on a busy urban street,



JULY-AUGUST CALENDAR

JULY GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, July 8.....7pm

JULY TRAIL DAY

Saturday, July 11.....8am

AL JARAMILLO'S BIRD BEHAVIOR

Saturday, July 11.....8pm

JULY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

Saturday, July 18.....9am

RAY PESTRONG'S GEOLOGY of WEST

Wednesday, July 22.....8pm

AUGUST TRAIL DAY

Saturday, August 8.....8am

AUGUST GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, August 12.....7pm

AUGUST HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

Saturday, August 15.....9am


RALPH LARSEN STEELHEAD

Saturday, August 22.....8pm

For all events meet at the Visitor Center

(Craig and Coyote, continued)

a coyote had just crossed their paths on a busy urban street & loped down a sidewalk in front of a gas station.

Melissa Peabody recently produced (and edited & shot) a good film, largely about coyotes in cities: "SF, Still Wild at Heart" see <http://www.stillwildatheart.com/> [VC. Pgm in Jan of this yr] article & poem selection  **Craig Nikitas**

(Run, Steelhead continued from pg 1)

biologist at one of the Oregon universities. When he learned of my plans, he pointed out the **kelp** forests off the Big Sur coast below, & told me that marine biology was a much more interesting & exciting way to go."

Later a marine biol. professor, invited me to join his group to study fish ecology, teaching me to dive, & got me started on a research project [at Occidental College], setting in motion the rest of my professional career.

I went on to UCSB [MA and PhD] that fall with my new wife, **Sandy**, [active in "Friends of the Library"] where I began the study of **rockfish** communities in kelp forests. This led to my lecturing at UCB for a year, working at a marine lab at Long Island, for a year, & studying the effects of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station near San Diego for a year. I joined the faculty of & taught at SFSU until I retired in 2006.

For most of my career, I studied **kelp-forest fish**, and rockfish in particular. Since 1967, I have logged over 2300 SCUBA dives, and still like diving, even for fun. It was great all those years, to be out in the environment, seeing how things change. [**Ralph & Sandy** worked on May trail day; & are pictured in that issue]